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U.S. Trains Salvador Police as Ban Is Lifted

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SAN SALVADOR, Feb. 24 — The Reagan Administration has begun unrestricted training for all of El Salvador's police forces, according to United States diplomats here.

The program is being carried out under the terms of legislation approved late last year under which Congress ended a decade-old ban on the police training program.

Although Congress granted a few special exceptions last year to allow limited help to the police in El Salvador, the new training program appears to mark a major increase in official United States involvement with the Salvadoran police.

The new willingness to expand police training here is in sharp contrast to past practice. In 1974 Congress prohibited almost all training of foreign police units because of repeated charges that American-assisted security forces were guilty of consistent human-rights violations.

Pressure From U.S. Embassy

Three weeks ago United States military advisers began a \$5 million program to train and equip the Salvadoran national police, national guard and treasury police, according to an Amer-

ican official. The training will concentrate on urban counterterrorism, he said.

As recently as two years ago in El Salvador, United States diplomats said the three main police forces, which have 11,000 to 12,000 members, were guilty of hundreds of killings and regularly tortured those they detained.

Under strong pressure from the United States Embassy, physical disfigurement and killings by the police appear to have almost ended in the last year. But there are reliable reports that the police still sexually abuse women prisoners, threaten prisoners' families, strip prisoners and deprive

them of sleep for days, according to human-rights investigators and international relief officials.

American officials say, however, that renewed United States help is now merited because the police have stopped killing prisoners and are facing a renewed threat from leftist rebel units infiltrating back into the capital and other cities.

Urban Commando Team

Despite strong criticism from human-rights groups in the United States, American officials also say that if the United States hopes to professionalize the Salvadoran police and keep them from abusing prisoners, it must train and equip them.

Under special exceptions granted last year, American advisers previously trained a police urban commando

team, an urban counterterrorism unit of the treasury police and a special investigating unit to be used in politically sensitive crimes.

The new training program begun three weeks ago will help police forces, most of which have an unsavory record. The large intelligence units of the treasury police and the national guard were once considered by American diplomats to be little more than standing death squads.

The intelligence unit of the treasury police was reorganized, but that of the national guard never was. Except for two cases involving American victims, no police officer and almost no police enlisted men have ever been punished for the mass killings of the recent past.

Two officers of the intelligence unit of the national guard, Capt. Eduardo Avila and Lieut. Isidro Rodolfo Lopez Sibrian, as well as two enlisted men, are strongly believed by American diplomats to have carried out the killings of two American land experts and the head of the Salvadoran land redistribution institute in 1981.

The two enlisted men were found guilty of murder three weeks ago. The two officers remain free, though one was forced to resign from the army.

National guard enlisted men also raped and killed four American churchwomen in 1980, and it is widely believed they were acting on orders from senior officers who were never caught. Two former police officers believed by American officials to have been involved in many human-rights abuses, Maj. José Ricardo Pozo and Lieut. Col. Mario Denis Morán, were recently promoted to lieutenant colonel and colonel.